

A Web Content Rx White Paper

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## **Ten Tips To Make Your Website Pull It's Weight**

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## Introduction

Your web site is a business tool. It is in every sense of the word an employee with a job to do. If you site is not doing what you need to do then you are throwing away your money.

Here are twelve ways you can get your site up to speed, or just give a a critique.

## **1. Treat Your Web Site Like an Employee**

Your Web site has a job to do, treat it as you would any other employee whose job is sales, marketing, and advertising. To be effective, your Web site needs measurable goals that you can use to determine its effectiveness. To simply throw material on the Web with no clear-cut idea of what the information is supposed to accomplish is a waste of your money and resources. Ask customers how they found your site. Search for your site yourself, in all major search engines, can you find it? Review the statistics on the visitors who access your site. How many 'hits' per day do you get? How long do they stay? What pages of your site are most popular? This information is invaluable and costs you nothing because your Web statistics contain it.

## **2. Make Your Website a Resource for Your Customers**

This will keep your customers visiting again and again. What to include? Let your customer needs be your guide. Do they need product specifications, current costs, currency conversion, instructions to set up or trouble shoot complex devices or software? Position yourself as the go-to site for high quality information, data, and assistance when your customers have problems. This reputation is priceless, and will be reflected in customer loyalty. There is an old saying, "A friend in need, is a friend indeed." When you help someone out of a jam, you make a friend.

## **3. Do Not Tell Customers What You Do, Tell Them What You Can Do for Them**

We all listen to that most important FM station, WIIFM, What's In It For Me. Make clear what you can do for the user. On every major page of your site, list your business name, address, telephone number, link to your contact us page or include an email link. Every page must be able to stand alone in this regard, because you have no control over what page a user will access when entering your site.

## **4. Include an About Us Page and Customer Testimonials**

Here is your chance tell a prospective customer or client about the company, its senior staff, how long it has been in business, where you are located, and other pertinent material that is important, but does not fit elsewhere on your site. Take care with the style of writing here, not too formal, not too friendly. If you are a high technology firm a short bio of the senior staff may be called for, if you are an online seller of shoes, that may not be important. What ever you do, here is the place to tell the world about yourself.

Always include testimonials from your customers, because they show that others have successfully done business with you. Put your testimonials on a separate page and link to it. Or put a short testimonial at the top of your main page. Include the name of the person and his or her company or organization that gave you the testimonial. A testimonials like this:

“Great job.”  
J. Customer, Connecticut

Is never as effective as this is:

“Great service, timely shipping, knowledgeable people.”  
Janet Customer  
Marketing Director  
Company Name.

The difference is striking. While the first could be from anyone the second is from a particular person at an acknowledged company.

## **5. Research and Determine Who Your Readers Are**

Write to that educational or skill level. You may find that your user is very competent and highly experienced in the field. If so, write to an expert level of competence. Should your users be children or teens, use short paragraphs and make your point quickly. This is especially important when writing sales material or when, for example, you need to show the benefits of a new electronic product. Don't hesitate to write one sentence paragraphs when your users are young people. The rule that says not to have one sentence paragraphs was made to be broken. And this is the perfect situation to break it. Let the needs for clarity dictate how you structure your words.

Should you be selling life insurance, answer all questions fully and completely. In this case, your target user wants in-depth information. That is also true when placing highly technical information online for engineers, technicians, mechanics, and others who need to access specific data quickly.

When you need to accommodate users with differing levels of expertise, include a table of contents that shows what is appropriate for a novice and what is for advanced users. A table of contents is invaluable when dealing with complex information, machines, or situations where detail is important. In this way, those in need specific data can get it quickly. Sites that offer this ability are invaluable and will be remembered, talked about, and linked to. Detail on your Website also makes it more credible.

## **6. Search Engine Optimization**

See that you have pertinent keywords in the <title> tag of your site. This is very important. Also make use of your sites's META description tag. On each graphic on your site place ALT date. This is an excellent way to increase keyword usage.

Link to all of your social networking sites and to a blog if yo use one. At all of these sites link back to your Web site. Your web site is the crown jewel of your social networking campaign. Use it well.

## **7. Make Your Site Easy to Navigate**

Use consistent navigation links on every major page of your Web site. Be sure that their color, placement, order is identical from page to page. This is critical to ease of use and user retention, because users like consistency. No user should ever get lost and have no way to return to your main page. People will simply leave your site and go elsewhere. All links must take the user to where they say they will. To intentionally mislabel a link smacks of deception and destroys your credibility. Do not mislead or misrepresent the destination of a link.

## **8. Install Site Search Capability**

Nothing is easier for your customers to use than a site search box. This is used be every major e-commerce site out there. You can use this capability by installing site search capability on your opening page. A search box is a demonstrated asset to any business site, especially when many products, or a great deal of information is presented.

There are many ways to do this. They range from using a major search engine like Google to do the search to installing your own search facility on your Web site. If you use Google, or another external search engine, be aware that the material searched for mush have been scanned by Google before it will appear in the search results. So, if you are updating your Web site routinely, this is not a good option because it can be some time before Google re-scans your site. In that case you are better off with your own search capability because your Web master can simply keep it up to date.

## **9. Write for the Web, Not for Print**

Writing for the Web is not like writing for print. People do not read the Web, they scan it looking for pertinent information and specific facts. While people are comfortable reading print in a word-for-word manner, they do not read the Web that way. Write tight. Use no more words that what are needed. Use no more sentences than required. Users do not want to read fluff, marketing hype, or a sale's pitch that you've embedded in valuable information. In fact, users resent it - they resent it a great deal. Don't do it. Make your

words all meat and potatoes, solid, easily read and understood, and to the point. Use simple words, express yourself in simple words that get the message across. Don't dumb down the material. What we are saying is that your intended user must never be forced to look up words to understand what you are writing about. If users can't understand your content they will go elsewhere. We realize that not all content can be understood by everyone. Content must be understood by its intended user for it to accomplish its intended mission. Without a mission, its fluff, get rid of it.

## **10. Promote Your Website and Business with a Media Release**

Getting the word out that you exist, where you are and what you sell is critical to your success. Make it a habit to send a media release at least two or three times per year. Sending one quarterly is even better. Always find a tie in to local, state, or national news and remember that the target of your media release is the media, not your customers. Never expect a thinly disguised advertisement to be picked up as news. It won't.